# Acknowledgement

I gratefully acknowledge the people who helped me while conducting this research. First and foremost, I would like to express my deepest gratefulness to my supervisor Dr. Raee, whose patience, encouragement and insightful suggestions rendered the completion of thesis possible.

I am extremely thankful to my reader, Dr. Hemmati whose generous contribution and encouraging words throughout this study were precious. Besides, I would like to express my deepest gratitude and love to my dear family and my kind friend Fatemeh Maddah whose wholehearted support and encouragement was with me in my studies.

**To my family**

**and my professors who have been**

**sources of inspiration throughout my life.**

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## List of Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| **ZPD** | Zone of Proximal Development |
| **ESL** | English as Second Language |
| **EFL** | English as Foreign Language |
| **NSs** | Native Speakers |
| **NNSs** | Non-native Speakers |
| **L١** | First Language |
| **L٢** | Second Language |
| **OTR** | Other Regulation |
| **SER** | Self Regulation |

**Abstract**

This study attempts to investigate the effect of peers' revision in comparison to that of the teacher, and whether peers' comments and teachers' comments facilitate students' revision? If yes, which one is more effective? Also attempts have been made to see which aspects of language are more highlighted by peers versus teachers when commenting. Besides, it is investigating the student's attitude toward the comments given by peers versus teachers in the writing skill. Previous studies have mainly focused on other aspects such as the effect of teachers' comments on students writing and not in comparison to that of the peers. Moreover, this study has not been extensively replicated in Iran. The teachers assigned participants a number of writing tasks, which were corrected by three groups of feedback providers. The first group of feedback providers were the same proficiency students, the second group, were higher proficiency students, and the last group were teachers. A micro genetic approach was conducted in order to analyze the collected written data gathered by students. Besides, the researcher chose some students randomly (because of lack of time) from the participants who carried out the task, to take a part in an interview. Also to collect more information from all the participants, a questionnaire was prepared by the researcher and distributed among all the participants as well. The result of analysis revealed that peer comments and teacher comments did not facilitate revision equally. The data revealed that teachers' comments were both more reliable and influential to the students. Results obtained from statistical procedures revealed that different aspects of language were highlighted by different groups. It could be observed that in all groups, grammar is of utmost attention. The final finding of the study, based on the questionnaire and the interview, was about the students' attitudes and feelings about teacher's and peers' feedback. They preferred to get feedback from their instructor rather than their peers.

**Key words**: peer interaction, zone of proximal development (ZPD), scaffolding, writing revision

**Chapter One**

**Introduction**

١،١.**Overview**

Teaching writing as a process of discovery aims to raise students' awareness of the recursive nature of the composing process while allowing teacher and peer (or peer-peer) collaboration as well as intervention during the learning process as the two parties of learners and teachers negotiate meaning (Reid, ١٩٩٤; cited in Paulus, ١٩٩٩).

Collaborative stances in revision tasks seem to be characterized by an emphasis on negotiating ideas and making meaning throughout the interactions, by peers trying to see the text through the writer's eyes, and by an atmosphere of mutual respect in which feedback is allowed to flow freely from writer to reader and vice versa (Reid, ١٩٩٤; cited in Paulus, ١٩٩٩).

In collaborative peer interactions, there is an interpsychological effort to achieve intersubjectivity, a state of mutual commitment to the task in which roles (reader/writer, novice/expert) are exchanged between the participants.

The use of small group and pair work in classrooms, particularly in second language (L٢) classrooms, rests upon strong theoretical and pedagogical bases. From a theoretical perspective, the use of small groups/pairs accords with a social constructivist view of learning. The roots of social constructivism are based on the work of Vygotsky (١٩٧٨).

According to Vygotsky(١٩٧٨), human development is inherently a socially situated activity.
A child's (novice) cognitive development arises in social interaction with a more able member of society. The more able member (expert), by providing the novice with the appropriate level of assistance, stretches the novice beyond their current level towards their potential level of development. Such assistance is now commonly referred to in the literature as scaffolding. However, as a number of researchers have shown (e.g., Donato, ١٩٩٤; Storch, ٢٠٠٢), scaffolding can also occur among peers when working in group/pair work. Thus, from a social

constructivist perspective, learners should be encouraged to participate in activities which foster interaction and co-construction of knowledge. From a pedagogical perspective, the use of small group and pair work is further supported by the communicative approach to L٢ instruction, and its emphasis on providing learners with opportunities to use the L٢.

However, the use of small group/pair work in writing classes seems quite limited. It tends to be limited to the beginning stages (brainstorming), or more commonly, to the final stages of writing—the peer review stage. In this final stage, students review each other's written text and make suggestions on how it could be improved. A number of researchers (e.g., Ferris, ٢٠٠٣) have noted the benefits of such peer reviews. Foremost among these benefits is that peer reviews are a way of raising students' awareness of audience consideration and at the same time, they may help learners develop analytical and critical reading and writing skills (Leki, ١٩٩٣).

The current study aims to investigate the roles that teacher feedback and peer feedback play in the writing of learners of English in a foreign language setting. This is particularly of significance in Iran, where due to cultural beliefs, students usually depend on the teacher for receiving feedback and correction rather than their peers. Therefore, there are limited chances of interaction between learners specially in writing activities.

Hence the present study is to investigate the roles of the teacher and peer feedback in the revisions that the learners carry out on their writing, and also to compare their roles with each other. The reason for this comparison is to find out whether the learners rely on and learn more from the feedback that they receive from the teacher or their peers.

**١,٢ Statement of the Problem:**
Till ١٩٨٠s, the role of comprehensible input has been emphasized. The dominant figure who has shed light on the role of comprehensible input is Krashen (١٩٨١). Comprehensible input is defined as the type of input that is not exactly the same as the level that students possess at the beginning of their education. In other words, it is one step above their current level of competence, and since it engages the learners, it can end in successful L٢ learning.

Swain (۱۹۸۵) criticizes Krashen for not including an important aspect of language learning in his theory. She calls it the "output hypothesis", which claims that pushing learners to produce output is essential for L۲ acquisition. It is important to note that Swain does not claim that output is the only source of L۲ acquisition. Her claim is that output can, under conditions; promote language acquisition by allowing learners to recognize problems in their IL capacities.

Through producing output, learners can test their hypothesis about learning, and can notice the difference existing between their interlanguage and the target language standards. However, neither Krashen nor Swain has focused on the importance of negotiation and interaction between learners, and whether it can influence language learning or not. Theoretical claims about the benefits of conversational interaction have been made by Gass (۱۹۹۷), Long (۱۹۹۶), Pica (۱۹۹٤) and others.

The Interaction Hypothesis (Long, ۱۹۹۶) suggests that negotiated interaction can facilitate SLA. One reason for this could be that, during interaction, learners may receive feedback on their utterances. However, interaction and comments in EFL classes where NNSs participate have not been addressed. In other words, it is particularly of interest in Iran, where teacher's comments are mostly favored by the students, to see whether the teacher's and peers' focus and types of comments are the same or not. The purpose of this paper is to analyze whether teacher`s and learners' feedback during their revision is different from each other. If yes, which aspects of the target language are influenced more during the process of revision?

## ۱،۳. Research Questions:
۱. Do peer comments and teacher comments facilitate revision? If yes, which one is more effective?
۲. Quantitative research question: Which aspects of language are more highlighted by peers versus teachers when commenting?
۳. Qualitative research question: What are the students' attitudes toward the comments given by peers versus teachers in the writing skill?

**١,٤. Research Hypothesis:**

The hypothesis set for the present study is as follows:

Null Hypothesis: Teachers` comments on their students` writing lead to higher achievement in comparison to the peers` comments.

**١,٥. The Purpose and the Significance of the Study**

As mentioned before, sociocultural perspective forms the conceptual frame work of the study. In this perspective language development is believed to be a social process and, learning happens through social interaction. This means the individual and the environment mutually constitute one another, and people are not considered separate from the environment and interactions through which language development occurs. In this view, knowledge is not owned solely by the learner, but is also a property of social settings and the interface between a person and social context. Hence learners should be encouraged to foster interaction and co-construction of knowledge. From pedagogical perspective, the use of small group works is supported by communicative approach to $L^2$ instruction and its emphasis on providing learners with opportunities to learn $L^2$.

As a result small groups are formed in this study to see whether in the setting of the present study group work and interaction has the same effect as it is believed by the supporters of this perspective (e.g. Lantolf, ١٩٩٨; Vygotsky, ١٩٧٨). Besides, it is attempted to see whether the feedback provided by teacher or the students regarding mistakes which appear in participants' writing can improve the writing quality.

There are fruitful grounds to work in this area in Iran. Firstly, this study has not been extensively replicated in Iran, and previous studies have mainly focused on effect of teachers` feedback by itself and not in comparison to that of peers. Secondly, because of our culture, traditional attitude and educational atmosphere, the classes were mainly teacher-centered and students mostly depended on their teachers for receiving feedback, comments and generally for learning. This study can be a new attempt to investigate whether nowadays peers` revisions and comments can be as effective as those of teachers or not.

**١،٦. Definitions of Key Terms**

**Peer interactions**: An interpsychological effort to achieve intersubjectivity, a state of mutual commitment to the task in which roles (reader/writer, novice/expert) are exchanged between the participants (Long, ١٩٩٦).

**Zone of proximal development (ZPD):** The interactional space within which a learner is enabled to perform a task beyond her or his current level of competence, through assisted performance (Vygotsky, ١٩٧٨).

**Scaffolding**: The process by which tutors-parents, caretaker, teachers, or more expert partners help someone less skilled solve a problem (Donato, ١٩٩٤; Vygotsky, ١٩٧٨).

**Writing revision**: Negotiating the meaning through peers or teacher-student interaction and editing the text cooperatively (Reid, ١٩٩٤).

## Chapter Two
## Review of Literature

### ٢.١. Introduction

This chapter presents a review of the related literature about sociocultural perspective and how it justifies learning. Besides, the major tenets of sociocultural will be introduced. Afterwards, the role of revision and its effect on learning will be discussed. Subsequently the types of teacher feedback and the students' attitude toward the type of feedback presented by either the teacher or the more knowledgeable peer will be mentioned.

### ٢.٢. Traditional View toward Writing

In recent years the process approach to writing has become the mainstream orthodoxy in composition classes. This approach seeks to shift emphasis away from an endless stream of composition assigned by the teacher, written by learners, handed in for making by the teachers, handed back to the learners and promptly forgotten by them as they start on the next assignment. Instead, the emphasis is on the process of writing itself, and involves pre-writing work to generate ideas and the writing of multiple drafts to revise and extend those ideas. Feedback is seen as essential to the multiple-draft process as it is what pushes the writer through the various drafts and on to the eventual end-product (Muncie ٢٠٠٠).

Traditional student/teacher relationships are unequal in terms of the distribution of power. Students tend to accept the authority of the teacher, while the teachers have the authority of their institution behind them with its power to pass or fail the student (Hyland, ٢٠٠٠). However, the alternative view to learning which considers feedback provided by more knowledgeable person as the means through which learners can act above their cognitive development is socio-cultural perspective.

### ٢.٣. Sociocultural Perspective

Socio-cultural perspective to learning that has originated from the works of Vygotsky, the Soviet psychologist, semiatician, and pedagogue has become an outstanding view during the last two decades. The supporters of this perspective (e.g. Lantolf, ٢٠٠٦; Donato, ١٩٨٨; Brooks

& Donato, ١٩٩٤; Schinke-Llano, ١٩٩٣) emphasize the social nature of learning that will be discussed in detail bellow.

### ٢.٣.١. Human Cognitive Development

Although there are many themes running through Vygotsky's work, of particular relevance to this study is Vygotsky's theory of human cognitive development and the centrality of social interaction within the zone of proximal development, According to Vygotsky (١٩٧٨): "Human cognitive development, and in particular the development of higher order cognitive functions, such as voluntary attention is socially situated. Vygotsky argues that essentially, from the very beginning of life, for development to occur, a child needs to interact with a more able member of their society such as parent, teacher, sibling or peer" (Storch, ٢٠٠١:٣٢).

According to Vygotsky, human cognitive development is inherently a social one. That is to say, a child's (or novice's) learning happens through interacting with more knowledgeable people. In fact this perspective supports the claim that studies of group and pair work need to be situated within a general theoretical framework of cognitive development

.

Vygotsky's (١٩٧٨) theory of cognitive development is also one of increasing regulation. Thus, initially, the more experienced member is in total control, interpreting and giving meaning to any action or gesture made by the child. However, gradually the meaning is internalized by the child and the child attains the ability to function independently of other's guidance.
Based on the point mentioned above, there are two points that need more clarification; "the significant other" and "the *guide* provided by the more experienced member".

In order to explain who the "more experienced member" can be, it seems necessary to analyze the process of moving from interpsychological to intrapsychological state and the emerging role of the more experienced member. Meaningful social interaction functions as a mechanism through which the transformation of the L٢ from interpsychological to intrapsychological functioning occurs. The first stage of learning emerges in interpsychological state. That is to say, learning occurs as the members cooperate and interact with each other. Usually at this

stage, the control of activity and directing the path of learning toward the desirable stage is controlled by the more capable person. Gradually as the less capable person develops, the degree and the type of assistance decrease (Ohta, ۱۹۹۵, cited in Lantolf, ۲۰۰۰). In other words:

> Higher psychological processes unique to human can be acquired only through interaction with others, that is through interpsychological processes that only later will begin to be carried out independently by the individuals. When this happen, some of these processes lose their initial, external form and are converted in to intrapsychological processes. (Wells, ۱۹۹۹: ۳۱۹)

## ۲.۳.۲. Zone of Proximal Development and Scaffolding

The next points within the realm of socio-cultural perspective which needs attention are *Zone of Proximal Development* (ZPD) and *Scaffolding,* the concept related to ZPD.

Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development describes how cognitive growth occurs in children. Rather than considering the child's potential in terms of a static measure such as an IQ score, Vygotsky felt that a developmental measure was needed to better assess children's educative potential.

According to Mitchell and Myles (۲۰۰۴: ۱۹۵), "the domain where learning can most productively take place is defined as the **Zone of Proximal Development**, that is the domain of knowledge or skill where the learner is not yet capable of independent functioning, but can achieve the desired outcome given relevant scaffolded help". The zone of proximal development was defined by Vygotsky, as: "The difference between the child's mental levels as determined by independent problem solving and the higher level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers." (Vygotsky, ۱۹۷۸: ۸۵)

Of particular importance to instruction within ZPD is the nature of the guidance offered by the expert or the nature of collaboration with the more capable peer. One of the implicit assumptions in the construct of the ZPD is that pairing of novice and expert will guarantee

appropriate guidance. However, in a study done by McLane (١٩٨٧, cited in Storch, ٢٠٠١), since the assistance provided by the peers were either insufficient or at an inappropriate level for the novices, it couldn't end in development in the ZPD.

In another study, Ohta (٢٠٠٥) showed that the assistance the learner receives through interaction with an L٢ expert might also push pragmatics development. According to her study, conducting research on the role of the ZPD in interlanguage pragmatic development will draw some researchers to consider alternative paradigms of second language learning and development. According to this study, there are a variety of sociocognitive approaches to language development that include the ZPD as an integral part of human developmental processes.

The concept closely related to ZPD is **scaffolding** which is a metaphor to capture the qualities of the type of other-regulation within the Zone of Proximal Development which is supposedly most helpful for the learning or appropriation of new concepts. This concept was first used by Vygotsky and Luria in reference to how adults introduce children to cultural means. Later on, the metaphor of scaffolding has been extended in educational psychology to refer to the process by which tutors, parents, caretakers, teachers, or more expert partners- help someone less skilled solve a problem. According to Wood, Bruner, and Ross (١٩٧٦), tutorial interactions are crucial in fostering development in human being. These authors hypothesized that successful scaffolding is characterized by six actions on the tutor's part: (a) recruiting the tutee's attention, (b) reducing the degree of freedom in order to make it manageable, (c) keeping directions in terms of the goals, (d) marking critical features, (e) controlling frustration, and (f) modeling solutions. Furthermore according to these writers, successful scaffolding depends on how skillfully the tutors manage the interaction between task and tutee's demands.

To put it in another form, Wertsch (١٩٧٩, cited in Lantolf, ٢٠٠٦) describes scaffolding as a dialogically produced interpsychological process through which learners internalize knowledge they co-construct with more capable peers. For intellectual growth to occur,